

Dear Senators and Representatives:

I am writing as principal of O'Brien STEM Academy in East Hartford to oppose the elimination of funding for CommPACT. CommPACT's Community Schools Collaborative has been an important part of O'Brien's turnaround plan, and it has provided us with the expertise to help our school increase both family and community engagement in the past 1 1/2 years. Since we joined CommPACT, they have helped us design and create a family center, which houses space for a food pantry and for parent meetings and volunteers, and computers for parents/guardians to use. A year ago, when we were just beginning this work, CommPACT provided a facilitator for a "Visioning" event which involved all stakeholders in discussing and envisioning where O'Brien should be five years from now. We have used the gathered ideas from this event to write a vision statement for our family/community engagement work. CommPACT has continued to provide resources and access to professional development and conferences to which we have sent multiple staff members, and from which we have brought back and implemented multiple ideas.

Over the past year and a half, staff and parents have noted greatly increased family engagement, including both numbers of events for families and attendance at these events. We have multiple parent volunteers regularly helping in the school, for the first time. More family members are engaged in our PTO, and our SGC has an active community member for the first time this year.

We continue to work with and look forward to information provided by CommPACT, which is helping us continue to implement our vision to increase both family and community involvement at O'Brien.

Lesley Morgan Thompson